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Letter dated 5 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ahead of the preparation of your first report on the implementation of resolution 2401 (2018) I have the honour to forward to you information on violations of that resolution by terrorist groups and illegal armed groups in Syria from 2 to 5 March 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vassily **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 5 March 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information on the activities of illegal armed groups in the eastern Ghutah de-escalation zone undermining the implementation of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) (as at 3 March 2018, 9 a.m. Moscow time)

1. Despite the cessation of hostilities established throughout the country, there were round-the-clock provocations and violations by illegal armed groups in eastern Ghutah, as well as in Aleppo and Ladhiqiyah governorates. Illegal armed groups continued to shell Damascus and its suburbs. There were 11 shelling incidents in the past 24 hours. A total of 28 120-mm mine blasts were registered during the day, which made it impossible to dispatch humanitarian convoys and evacuate the injured. There was destruction in Damascus, as well as injured civilians.

2. The situation in the area of the Wafidin camp checkpoint remained tense. Snipers regularly fired on the approaches to the checkpoint. Jaysh al-Islam militants in eastern Duma shelled twice from mortars the security corridor on the road to the checkpoint. This prevented once again the exit of civilians from the zone of military operations. However, two children managed to escape the blocked zone at night-time.

3. Extremists distribute leaflets demanding that people stay home, threatening them with death in case of disobedience and executing refugees in public. The people are running out of food, water and other basics.

4. Militants actively used tunnels to carry out provocations against Syrian army units. Exits from these underground constructions are situated in public places, in particular, mosques, hospitals and marketplaces. Using the tunnels, Islamists launch attacks against the positions of the Syrian military, as well as on humanitarian corridors.

5. The Syrian side conveyed information that the Jabhat al-Nusra, Faylaq al-Rahman and Ahrar al-Sham groups were preparing provocations with the use of toxic substances. The objective is to blame the Syrian army for using chemical weapons in eastern Ghutah. For this reason, the provocation is staged close to the contact line with the Syrian army. Civilian victims are supposed to be used by some Western countries to blame the Syrian leadership for using chemical weapons against its own people.

6. Jabhat al-Nusra leaders are preparing a provocation against the United Nations humanitarian convoy with medical supplies, to be dispatched soon to Duma. Jihadists plan to shell the vehicles from mortars, with the aim of subsequently blaming pro-Government forces for a violation of the cessation of hostilities.

4 March 2018. Over the weekend, Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists continued to block the exit of civilians from eastern Ghutah and opened mortar and sniper fire on the humanitarian corridor near the former camp for Palestinian refugees, the Wafidin camp, injuring several civilians.

The Barzah and Assad suburbs of Damascus underwent intensive fire on 2 March. Two children were wounded.

On 3 March, terrorists launched 64 mines on residential areas and suburbs of Damascus. Of the mines, 15 exploded near Bayruni hospital, damaging the building, and another 49 on the outskirts and in the historic centre of Damascus. Since resolution 2401 (2018) entered into force, 283 rockets and mortar shells have hit Damascus and its suburbs.

The Jaysh al-Izzah armed group, allied to Jabhat al-Nusra, fired on the positions of the Syrian army near Zalin in northern Hama.

Faylaq al-Sham militants attacked the positions of the Syrian army near Ballirmun in northern Aleppo.

There were violations of the cessation of hostilities by jihadists, growing into armed clashes with the Syrian army in Hama and Homs governorates, including near Jabburin, Kafr Nan, Mahattah, Javalik and Hulah.

5 March 2018. Jihadists launched seven mines from eastern Ghutah on the districts of Qaymariyah and Bab Tuma in Damascus. There were also explosions in Harasta, Jaramana and the suburb of Assad.

The Tishrin military hospital was shelled, as well as the medical centre in Rayhan, which sustained material damage.

In the southern de-escalation zone, Jabhat al-Nusra jihadists launched several rockets on the Kashif residential district in Dar'a and conducted sniper fire on Matar district in Dar'a, injuring several civilians. Some of them remain in a critical condition.

In north-western Hama, Jabhat al-Nusra and allied armed groups shelled Asilah and the Christian town of Muhradah.

Information on the activities of illegal armed groups in the eastern Ghutah de-escalation zone undermining the implementation of Security Council resolution 2401 (2018) (as at 5 March 2018, 9 a.m. Moscow time)

1. In the eastern Ghutah de-escalation zone, militants repeatedly fired from small weapons on the humanitarian corridor near the Wafidin camp checkpoint. Intensive cross-fire was registered in the area of the western part of Rayhan (north-eastern part of the de-escalation zone) in the immediate proximity of the medical post for evacuees. Islamists actively used snipers. Three local civilians were wounded. This once again prevented the exit of civilians from the zone of military operations.

2. Residential areas along the perimeter of the eastern Ghutah de-escalation zone were shelled from mortars by illegal armed groups from the territory under their control. A total of 25 120-mm mine blasts were registered over the weekend, injuring one person and causing significant material damage.

3. Jabhat al-Nusra militants continue to hold civilians in eastern Ghutah as human shields. Islamists threaten people with death any time they attempt to leave the de-escalation zone and conduct searches in order to confiscate food and information leaflets with maps indicating exits from the blocked area. Those trying to keep information leaflets are detained and transferred to sharia courts.

4. Militants imposed a curfew during the humanitarian pause in the area under their control. They seized mobile phones to prevent people from contacting the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic. All public gatherings are prohibited, with the aim of not allowing people to leave the zone that terrorists control.

5. Field commanders of the "Shabab al-Sunnah" unit of the Free Syrian Army in control of the southern de-escalation zone intensified the shelling of the positions of the Syrian army in the town of Dar'a, in solidarity with the militants blocked in eastern Ghutah, using field artillery and multiple rocket launchers.